

TOPIC 4: yourCHOICE

Are You Label Able?

Skill-Based Outcomes

Preteens who participate in this activity will be able to:

- ❖ Use serving sizes on Nutrition Facts labels to be aware of the volume of food and food energy (or calories) in the amounts of foods they choose to eat.
- ❖ Identify nutrients they need to “get less” and those they need to “get enough.”
- ❖ Compare foods to see if they are “high” or “low” in different nutrients.
- ❖ Use food labels to make informed food choices.
- ❖ Make an easy, tasty snack.

Empowerment Messages

- ❖ Food labels can help you make positive choices and get the food energy (or calories) and nutrients you need.
- ❖ Nutrition Facts on a food label tell how many calories (or energy) and nutrients you get from one serving.
- ❖ Nutrition Facts show the serving size. Larger amounts of foods give you more calories.
- ❖ The % Daily Value (DV) on the Nutrition Facts label is a number that allows you to know whether there’s a lot or a little of a nutrient in a serving of food. A quick guide is: 5% DV or less of a nutrient is LOW; and 20% DV or more is HIGH.
- ❖ To promote your health, Nutrition Facts can help you: (1) choose *Less* fat, especially saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium; (2) choose *Enough* fiber, vitamins A and C, calcium, iron.

Activity Summary

(Icebreaker) **Your Helpings—How Big?** - Preteens pour and then measure their usual amount of ready-to-eat cereal. Then they discover what's on the Nutrition Facts panel.

1 What's on a Label? - Preteens see how many different things they can learn about a mystery food (macaroni and cheese) just by reading the Nutrition Facts label.

2 Servings on the Label - Preteens explore serving sizes on labels by comparing serving sizes for the different foods on the *Read It Before You Eat It!* poster and measuring out a 1-cup serving.

3 Nutrients—The "5-20" Guide - Preteens get to know the "5-20" guide to food labeling, and use it to compare foods they pick from the *Read It Before You Eat It!* poster.

4 Balancing Food Choices for the Day - Preteens learn to use % DVs to fit their food choices into healthful eating for the whole day.

5 Shake Up the Grocery Bag! - Using *Nutrition Facts Cards* for a variety of foods, preteens practice using the "5-20" guide to food labeling. In the process, they move around!

6 (Afterschool Snack) Make a Cereal "Sundae" - Preteens use *Nutrition Facts Cards* to pick ingredients to put on the Cereal "Sundae" snack. Then they make their sundae.

(Wrap up) **What's yourCHOICE?** - To put their "power of choice" in action, preteens come up with personal steps for using Nutrition Facts to make their own food choices.

Getting Ready

● Read:

- ❖ Do You Know...? on the next page

● Display Posters:

- ❖ *Read It Before You Eat It!*
- ❖ *Feed Me!*
- ❖ *FIGHT BAC!*

● Get:

For "Your Helpings—How Big?"

- ❖ Ingredients: corn flakes or other ready-to-eat cereal (enough for each preteen to pour some cereal, which may be 2 cups or more depending on his or her appetite). Keep the cereal box.
- ❖ Small cereal box (1 ounce)
- ❖ Measuring cups
- ❖ Bowls for cereal, one per participant plus one more for the demonstration

For "Servings on the Label"

- ❖ Ready-to-eat cereal and 1 cup measuring cup (from "icebreaker" activity)

For "Balancing Food Choices for the Day"

- ❖ One or more sets of *Nutrition Facts Cards*

For "Shake Up the Grocery Bag!"

- ❖ One or more sets of *Nutrition Facts Cards* (Use only single foods, such as bread, and no mixed foods, such as pizza.)
- ❖ Grocery bag

For "Make a Cereal 'Sundae'" (snack activity)*

- ❖ Ready-to-eat cereal (in bowls from "icebreaker" activity)

- ❖ Ingredients: canned or fresh fruits (peaches, pineapple, other), yogurt, nuts, other cereal toppings, or lowfat milk as an option to yogurt
- ❖ Equipment: cutting board, knives, bowls and spoons to serve ingredients, measuring cups
- ❖ *Nutrition Facts Cards*: corn flakes or other cereal, fruits (e.g., canned or fresh peaches, pineapple, other), yogurt, mixed nuts, lowfat milk. Choose cards that match the ingredients you provide.
- ❖ Table setting: spoons, napkins, pens/pencils

* If your program has been approved to serve USDA's Afterschool Snacks, the snack served as part of this activity may qualify for reimbursement. For each participant, **serve at least 1 ounce ready-to-eat cereal and ¾ cup canned or fresh fruit.** (Specific reimbursement rules exist when yogurt is served in USDA's Afterschool Snacks in the National School Lunch Program.)

For "Wrapping Up: What's yourCHOICE?"

- ❖ "yourCHOICE" handout** for each participant
- ❖ (Optional) some form of recognition for each participant

** Reminder: Collect handouts for next session.

Do You Know...?

How can you use Nutrition Facts on food labels to eat healthfully?

Nutrition Facts on food labels tell the food energy (or calories) and nutrients in one serving of the food inside the package. You can use Nutrition Facts for different reasons, including:

- ❖ To know the nutrient content in one serving.
- ❖ To know what happens to calorie and nutrient amounts when you eat larger or smaller amounts of foods.
- ❖ To find foods with less or more of certain nutrients. That's helpful in two ways: (1) if you want to cut back on some nutrients, such as total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium; (2) if you want to consume more of the nutrients that often come up short, such as fiber, vitamins A and C, calcium, iron.
- ❖ To compare calories (food energy) and nutrients in similar foods, such as two kinds of chips or cheeses.
- ❖ To help you make choices within the food groups.

What nutrition information can you find on a label?

- ❖ **Serving size** and **number of servings** in the package.
- ❖ **Calories** in one serving.
- ❖ **Nutrients** that need your attention.
- ❖ The % DV on the Nutrition Facts label is a number that allows you to know whether there's a lot or a little of a nutrient in a serving of food.
- ❖ **Footnote** on the bottom, which shows how much or how little of some key nutrients you need each day. You may need more or less depending on your energy needs.*

* Show footnote on *Read It Poster*.

How big is a serving of food? The serving size on food labels varies for different foods. It may be more or less than what you usually eat. You'll find the serving size at the top of the Nutrition Facts label. The food label also tells how many servings the package contains.

What do Nutrition Facts tell you about food energy?

Calories are a measure of how much energy you get from food. Nutrition Facts tell how many calories you get from one serving. They also tell how many of those calories come from fat. If you eat two servings, you also get twice the calories. Pay attention to this information if you need to cut back on calories, perhaps to maintain a healthy weight.

What nutrients need your special attention? All nutrients are important to health. Some need special attention:

- ❖ **Nutrients to get less of:** fat, especially saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium. Eating too much of these nutrients can lead to becoming overweight and getting certain diseases, such as heart disease.
- ❖ **Nutrients to get enough of:** fiber, vitamins A and C, calcium, and iron. Eating enough of these nutrients can improve your health and help reduce the chances of getting some diseases and conditions, such as osteoporosis (brittle bone disease) from limited calcium and tiredness or anemia from limited iron.

How can you use Nutrition Facts to get less of some nutrients and get enough of others?

Look at the % DVs, and use the “5-20” guide for comparing nutrients in similar foods and for judging a food’s nutrient contribution to what you eat for a day.

- ❖ **5% DV or less is low:** For nutrients you want to get less of (such as saturated fat, cholesterol, and total fat), try to choose foods with a low % DV.
- ❖ **20% DV or more is high:** For nutrients you want to consume more of (such as calcium or fiber), try to choose foods with a high % DV.

yourCHOICE Are You Label Able?

Topic 4 Activities

Getting Started: Your Helpings— How Big?

A simple measuring activity gets preteens thinking about food labels and builds on what they discovered in Topic 3 about how much they eat.

Involve preteens in measuring and becoming aware of the amount of food they eat.

- ❖ **Let them each pour some ready-to-eat cereal into a bowl.**
- ❖ **Have them estimate the amount then measure it.**
- ❖ **Ask someone to find the Nutrition Facts on the food label of the cereal box. (ASK:**
 - Has anyone ever seen Nutrition Facts on a label?
 - What information is there? (*nutrition information about the food in the package, serving size, etc.*)
 - How big is one serving of cereal? (*1 ounce*) Show them a small 1-ounce box of cereal.
 - Have someone pour the contents into another bowl.
 - Is the amount of cereal each of you poured bigger, smaller, or the same as the serving on the food label?

Challenge their thinking: Keep the discussion open-ended so preteens talk freely, and everyone gets a chance to share his or her thoughts.

- ❖ Will it matter if you eat more or less than the serving amount on the label? Why?
- ❖ Will it be important for anyone in your family to pay attention to the amounts of foods they eat?
- ❖ How will knowing the serving size for cereal or any other food help you make food decisions?
- ❖ Before *The Power of Choice*, did you ever pay any attention to nutrition information on food labels? Why or why not?

Have preteens cover their bowls of cereal with a napkin, and write their names on the napkins. Then set the cereal aside for the snack activity later.

Activity 1: What's on a Label?

*Preteens explore a Nutrition Facts label on the **Read It Before You Eat It!** poster to see how much it tells them about the food inside the package.*

Have preteens pair up to see how many things they can find out about the food (macaroni and cheese) on the **Read It Before You Eat It!** poster just by looking at its Nutrition Facts. **POINT OUT:** The Nutrition Facts on the poster models what they'll see on almost any food package. For fun, let them guess what food it might be. (For example, the calcium amount suggests it might fit partly in the Milk Group.)

As a group, talk about what they found.

❖ **Talk until their list includes the following:**

- serving size
- servings in the package
- calories in a serving
- nutrient amounts in a serving
- how much you need of some nutrients

❖ **ASK:**

- What's HIGH and what's LOW in this food? How do you know?
- Is it a good meal choice?
- Where does this food fit in the food groups on the *Feed Me!* poster?
- What other foods can also be this high in calcium?

Brainstorm to come up with ways they can use this information. Use their ideas to probe discussion and reinforce messages later in the session.

Activity 2: Servings on the Label

Continue to use the **Read It Before You Eat It!** poster to go step by step through the Nutrition Facts for macaroni and cheese, starting at the top: serving size and servings per container.

Have preteens look at the poster to find out about serving sizes.

- ❖ How big is a serving of this food? (1 cup)
- ❖ Do you think that's smaller or bigger than what you normally eat?
Using the ready-to-eat cereal from the previous activity to represent macaroni and cheese, have someone measure 1 cup of cereal to see how much 1 cup is.
- ❖ How many servings would this package of macaroni and cheese have? (2 servings of 1 cup each)

Have them each pick two other food labels on the **Read It Before You Eat It!** poster. (ASK:)

- ❖ What can you tell about serving sizes for these foods? **Reinforce:** Different foods have different serving sizes. The label tells you how many.
- ❖ How can you use the serving size information on the food label to pick your afterschool snacks? Something to drink?

Have preteens see what they can find out about calories in a food using the food label. (ASK:)

- ❖ You know food gives you energy (measured in calories). What can a food label tell you about the calories in macaroni and cheese? **Probe** if you need to.
- ❖ How many calories does one serving of macaroni and cheese have? (250 calories)

Using the **Feed Me!** poster, help them link food labels to the Food Guide Pyramid when choosing foods. (ASK:)

- ❖ For the food labels you just picked, where do these foods fit in the food groups?
- ❖ How can you use food labels to follow advice from the Vegetable and Fruit Groups? Get enough from the Milk and Meat Groups?
- ❖ If you eat macaroni and cheese, where will it fit in the food groups? (Bread and Milk Groups)
- ❖ What other food can you eat with macaroni and cheese to make it a meal with more variety? **Encourage** them to enjoy foods from other food groups, too.

Activity 3: Nutrients— The “5-20” Guide

Move down the Nutrition Facts panel again. This time go to the nutrients, as preteens learn an easy way—the “5-20” guide—to spot nutrients to get less of and nutrients to get enough of.

Have preteens use the *Read It Before You Eat It!* poster to discover and discuss:

- ❖ What else do you see on the food label? (*nutrients*) **POINT OUT:** These nutrients need your special attention. Foods have other nutrients, too.
- ❖ Why do you think you need to pay attention to these nutrients? (*to stay healthy, to prevent getting too many of some nutrients and not enough of others*)
- ❖ Which nutrients do you need to get less of? (*total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium*) **POINT OUT:** Eating too much of these nutrients boosts your chances for some health problems as you get older, such as heart disease. Now is a good time for you to start eating less of these nutrients to help protect your health.
- ❖ Which nutrients do you need to get enough of? (*fiber, vitamins A and C, calcium, iron*) **POINT OUT:** Eating enough of these nutrients can improve your health and help reduce your chances for some health problems as you get older. Now is a good time for you to start eating enough of these nutrients to help protect your health.
- ❖ Which nutrients in macaroni and cheese are HIGH, and which ones are LOW?
- ❖ How do you know if a food is high or low in a nutrient? **Probe** until the discussion leads to the % Daily Values. **POINT OUT:** The “5-20” guide makes it easy to see if a food has a little or a lot of a nutrient.
 - LOW is when a nutrient for one serving has 5% Daily Value or less.
 - HIGH is when a nutrient for one serving has 20% Daily Value or more.
 - Daily Value is a number that allows you to know whether there’s a lot or a little of a nutrient in a serving of food.
- ❖ How can you use the “5-20” guide to pick snacks, drinks, or other foods? (*For nutrients you need to get less of, eat foods with plenty of LOWS. For nutrients you need to get enough of, eat plenty of HIGHS.*)

Have preteens pair up. Have them each pick at least two foods they like from the *Read It Before You Eat It!* poster, then tell each other about them using the “5-20” guide.

Activity 4: Balancing Food Choices for the Day

Preteens don't need to give up their food favorites! Instead, help them learn how to use % DVs to fit their food choices into healthful eating for the whole day.

Discuss: You don't have to give up a favorite food if it's HIGH in fat or LOW in fiber or calcium. Here's what you can do instead: (1) When you eat a lot of fat, cut back on the amount of high-fat foods for the rest of the day. (2) If you don't get enough calcium by noon, be sure to eat calcium-rich foods in the afternoon and evening.

Have preteens start exploring for how much fat different foods and beverages have.

- ❖ **Using the *Nutrition Facts Cards*, have them choose five foods or beverages then total the % DV for fat from a serving of each.**
- ❖ **ASK:**
 - What was the total amount of fat from one serving of each of these five foods?
 - Was it more or less than 100% DV for total fat?
 - Would you eat more than one serving of any of these foods? If so, add the extra % DV of fat onto your total.
 - Now, was your total % DV for calcium more or less than 100% DV?
- ❖ **POINT OUT:** Your goal is to get no more than 100% DV for total fat a day from all the foods you eat.

Have preteens start exploring for how much calcium different foods and beverages have.

- ❖ **Again using five *Nutrition Facts Cards*, have them add up the total % DV for calcium from a serving of each.**
- ❖ **ASK:**
 - What was the total amount of calcium from one serving of these five foods?
 - Was it more or less than 100% DV for calcium?
 - Would you eat more or less than one serving of any of these foods? If so, adjust the % DV for calcium on your total.
 - Now, was your total % DV for calcium more or less than 100% DV?
- ❖ **POINT OUT:** Your goal is to get at least 100% DV for total calcium a day from all the foods you eat.

Challenge their thinking:

- ❖ What did you think about the total % DV for fat or calcium for your five foods?
- ❖ What are some ways to cut back the % DV for total fat? To increase the % DV for calcium?
- ❖ How can you do that and still eat and enjoy some of these foods?

Probe for these:

- Change the amount of what you eat: for example, choose less of a high-fat food or more of a calcium-rich food.
- Substitute a similar food: try a lowfat salad dressing instead of regular salad dressing, or try orange juice with calcium instead of plain orange juice.

Activity 5: Shake Up the Grocery Bag!

Get preteens moving, as they practice using % Daily Values to spot foods HIGH and LOW in different nutrients. Fill a grocery bag with Nutrition Facts Cards before you start.

Have preteens reach into the grocery bag and take out a *Nutrition Facts Card*. Or have them each pick one *Nutrition Facts Card* for a snack they like.

Designate two areas in the room: one as LOW and one as HIGH with a spot in between.

Ask for a volunteer to call out these nutrients randomly, one at a time.

Nutrients to get “less” of:

- ❖ Total Fat
- ❖ Saturated Fat
- ❖ Cholesterol
- ❖ Sodium

Nutrients to get “enough” of:

- ❖ Fiber
- ❖ Vitamin A
- ❖ Vitamin C
- ❖ Calcium
- ❖ Iron

As each nutrient is called out, encourage preteens to decide where they *think the food fits*. They can read the Nutrition Facts on the card and use the “5-20” guide. For example, if “fat” is named, the preteen will move to the:

- ❖ HIGH area if he or she thinks the food is high in fat
- ❖ LOW area if he or she thinks the food is low in fat
- ❖ “middle” if he or she thinks the food is neither HIGH nor LOW

Remember: The “5-20” guide is simply a helpful tool that provides a way for preteens to balance their food choices for the day. It does not turn foods into good or bad foods.

Once everyone is in place:

- ❖ **For both HIGHS and LOWS, have each preteen call out the name of his or her food with its serving size. Talk about** what they learned about the foods by seeing where their foods fit.
- ❖ **(ASK:** Do we need to eat less of this nutrient, or eat more of it? They can check the *Read It Before You Eat It!* poster to find out.

Continue to shake up the food basket as preteens look at the HIGHS and LOWS of other nutrients in their food!

Activity 6: Make a Cereal “Sundae”

For more practice with label reading and making an easy snack, have preteens use Nutrition Facts to decide what to put on their Cereal “Sundae.”

Prepare Cereal “Sundaes” (using cereal measured out for “icebreaker” activity):

- ❖ **Give preteens a chance to wash their hands before handling foods.** Talk about this food safety tip. Refer to the messages on the *FIGHT BAC!* poster.

Food safety-smarts: Clean up with paper towels or a clean, cloth towel that has just been laundered. With paper towels, bacteria go right in the garbage can!

- ❖ **While the group continues with the grocery bag activity, have two volunteer preteens get the snack ingredients ready:** Rinse and cut fruits; place fruits and nuts in bowls; open yogurt (milk—optional); serve ingredients with spoons; set spoons, napkins, and pens/pencils on the table.
- ❖ **In front of each ingredient, have them place its *Nutrition Facts Card*.**
- ❖ **Have preteens choose and measure toppings to put on their cereal,** using information from the *Nutrition Facts Cards*.

As they enjoy their snack together, talk about the nutrition in their creation and why they chose that topping. Use the *Nutrition Facts Cards* and the *Feed Me!* poster to prompt discussion. **ASK:**

- ❖ What made your Cereal “Sundae” a healthful snack choice?
- ❖ Does it add a new combination of foods to your food choices?
- ❖ How can you use Nutrition Facts at home?
- ❖ What might you do differently if you make a Cereal “Sundae” at home? Why?
- ❖ How will the foods you might use compare?

Wrapping Up: What's yourCHOICE?

Wrap up by making “yourCHOICE” action plans to use Nutrition Facts to make food choices.

Review what they learned about this topic by having preteens sum up the messages on the *Read It Before You Eat It!* poster. **ASK:**

- ❖ How can you use the food label to make food choices during the day?
- ❖ How can label reading help your family make better food choices?

Why? **Talk about the goals and actions** they can take to use Nutrition Facts. **POINT OUT:** You don't need to know everything on the label. Pick just one or two things to look at. (*For example, GOAL: Use Nutrition Facts to pick snacks with less fat. Actions: Use Nutrition Facts labels to pick chips or another dry snack. Check serving size and % DV for fat to decide how much to eat.*)

On their “yourCHOICE” handout, have each person write a goal and three steps he or she can take this week to use Nutrition Facts on food labels to make healthier food choices. (Note: At the next session, ask them what actions they actually took.)

Have the participants see how they did with the goal and action steps each person wrote on their own “yourCHOICE” handout for the last topic. They can check (✓) the steps they took so far. (Optional) Each person who took at least one action receives some form of recognition.

Collect their handouts to use in upcoming sessions.